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ABSTRACT

The high rate of turnover of college presidents, the scarcity of willing replacements and haphazard recruitment methods are symptoms of a lack of clearly defined administrative needs--one of the most serious management problems in colleges and universities. Directionless institutions in this revolutionary era are likely to surrender to factional pressures and to misplace priorities. Perhaps the position of the president should be modified since neither academic nor managerial skills are sufficient to manage the modern university. We have failed to define the role and qualifications of the board of trustees, which shares responsibility for guiding institutions. Lack of managerial abilities and a complete understanding of and dedication to institutional needs and objectives by trustees and president can leave an institution floundering and defenseless. Both trustees and presidents should be accountable for their performance. As guidelines for mutual evaluation, 22 questions are suggested for the presidential candidate to ask the board, and 28 for the board to ask the presidential candidate. (Author/JS)

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ALLIANCE IN LEADERSHIP

"Injecting courage into the spine of a college president is as delicate an operation as a heart transplant." So a politician of the "We-wouldn't-be-having-these-riots-on-our-college-campuses-if-the-presidents-had-the-guts-to-squelch-them" school of accusation recently quipped. Needless to say, this is an over simplification of the problem, but still suggests weakness inherent in college administrators.

From the viewpoint of the president who has been caught in the middle of one of the campus uprisings that have occurred at the rate of one a day during the past year, this may seem a cruelly unjust accusation. Unfortunately, although we may vehemently deny it, we are often unable to successfully refute the charge since we, ourselves, often lack insight into the cause of our problems.

The statistics of the turnover in college and university presidents in recent years is indicative that, as a whole, we have been victims of a small revolution by which our society and its institutions have been besieged. Turnover in that position has increased an alarming rate in the past three years.

Warren Bennis, writing in the April issue of The Atlantic stated, "During the past twelve months more than 170 colleges and universities have chosen new presidents....As of February this year at least 112 schools were still looking for a chief executive." The scarcity of candidates who are willing to fill this position reveals a lack of optimism that the plight of the college or university president is going to improve. According to

HE 002 327

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Rev. G. T. Yates, director of International Student Affairs at Georgetown University: "Across the country there are hundreds of deanships and presidencies going begging because nobody wants to get up and stand in the center of a shooting gallery to have his head shot off."

That we do not really understand our own problems is substantiated by the fact that the attributes of leadership demanded are not well understood. John Harris of the Esso Education Foundation, which has been contacted for recruiting assistance by 30 schools made this point in revealing that: "When we ask which attributes they're willing to trade off, they say they want a man who will do the job - whatever that is. They don't really know." This indicates that many colleges and universities are fishing with a sort of trial and error recruitment which is hoped to produce a miracle-worker. If this is the case, then the massive turnover can be understood, not as the failure of those involved to become competent generals in a revolutionary era, but their inability to become supermen in the face of an inexplicable crisis.

A large rate of turnover, a scarcity of willing replacements, and recruitment by trial and error are lethal side-effects of the malady. To dig toward the source of our problems - the inability to define the attributes needed in "a man who will do the job" may stem from confusion over the elements and skills called forth by the job.

The lack of clearly defined goals has, in fact, been identified as one of the most serious management problems of most colleges and universities. The leaders of an institution without clearly defined and specific goals have about as much chance to direct their course through an era of revolution as

a general without a compass has of leading his troops through a forest. Among the pitfalls into which the directionless college or university can fall (as many have fallen) are the following:

The pressure of other, often opposing, factions to impose their own priorities and goals on the institution.

If a college itself does not establish its goals, other groups (radical students, discontented professors, or governmental agencies) may try to force their own, often opposing priorities on the college. The result has been felt on campus after campus, where the college or university has been ripped apart by protestors demanding incompatible conditions. The president, lacking the arms of concrete objectives, stands defenseless.

The inability to determine priorities.

Without clearly defined objectives (both long-ranged objectives which will guide the development of the institution toward the fulfillment of future needs and short-ranged objectives which will affect its ability to fulfill present needs), an institution is weak in the ability to determine priorities.

"Any managed situation, any formally organized group, must have clearly understood common purposes, with means of determining priority where purposes are multiple and may conflict." (The Board of Directors and Effective Management, Harold Koontz, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967, pg. 4.)

The average college catalog, with its somewhat grandiously stated aims of "educating the whole man" and "striving for excellence in education" offers little basis for determining priorities.

Like the politician, we are guilty of over-generalization.

The risk of misplacing priorities

The substance of even the generalized goals of the college or university as outlined in the catalog may actually exist more as a form of propaganda for the benefit of the lay reader than as the statement of missions felt most important by the administrators and faculty.

A questionnaire sent to 1[illegible], 000 college administrators, trustees, and faculty members, asking them to assign priorities to both actual or observed goals and preferred or desired goals revealed a low priority given to student related goals. Highest priorities were given the protection of the faculty's right to academic freedom and increasing or maintaining the prestige of the university. In contrast, undergraduate instruction was in 44th position on the forty-seven goal checklist, both on actual and desired goals. (University Goals and Academic Power, Edward Gross and Paul Grombsch, Washington, D. C.: American Council on Education, 1968)

The effects of giving low priority to undergraduate instruction have been felt in both student and faculty unrest.

The ability to chart and follow our course through the forest of revolution by a compass of objectives depends upon the strength of leadership. The navigation of the 20th century institution of higher education has been severely handicapped by 19th century naivete in leadership and management on campus.

In the context of today's complex university, the role of the presidency or chief navigator, as it has been traditionally interpreted, does seem to require a superhuman. The president is expected to be a scholar, fund raiser, speech maker, negotiator, planner, and business executive who can

meet the often opposing demands of student groups, faculty, alumni, and state legislators, while running a multi-million dollar complex. It is little wonder that a man whose first dedication is to the education and development of the young would shun a job which leaves him neither time nor energy to pursue what he thinks his job is.

Is the position of the president in need of modification? If so, how about the criteria for presidential service? Neither academic or management abilities alone are sufficient to manage the modern college or university. On the one hand, serious problems have been caused by the tradition of selecting an ivory-tower scholar who may have visions of building a brilliant curriculum, but lacks the ability to communicate his ideas to the staff, to organize the financial and physical machinery that will effect their enactment, or to negotiate the support of faculty and student body. On the other hand, the manager type may be able to cope with the daily crises of today's turbulent era and to maintain a smooth-running organization, but fail in the ability to envision or to set into motion the radical changes in the process of education that are essential if the college is to advance. In one we have a navigator who can read the compass but can't marshall the troops; in the other, a navigator who can marshall the troops but does not know in which direction to lead them.

Of the two, college and university trustees have been more guilty in ignoring the managerial and leadership skills. It has been said that if the president of every college or university were to take a five day course given

in fundamental management principles, some of the weaknesses of the college system may disappear. This again may be an over generalization, but one might at least assume that a seminar of this type would do little damage.

Training, however, is not the key to strong leadership if the basic material of leadership is missing. Some men, chosen on the basis of their successful records as middle-line managers, could not have been transformed into chief executives no matter how much training they received. We fail to realize that success in a position in which a man primarily interprets policy and recommends actions does not guarantee success in a position in which a man initiates policy and decides actions, and so err by promoting a middle-line manager into a presidency which he is not capable of handling.

This, then, is our second weakness in defining presidential qualifications: we are not only confused about the elements and skills required by the job, but we lack insight into the basic ingredients of leadership and management.

The board of trustees, as well as the president, navigates the course of an institution of higher education. Yet, the leadership strength of the board has also been weakened by our failure to review the role and our inability to define the qualifications of the board as well as the president.

Board members are often elected more according to their justification to membership in a highly prestigious group than their ability to function as policy makers of an institution. Once elected, members often seem to feel that their responsibility ends with the selection of the president.

Frequently, the board is constituted of highly talented and successful business and professional men who are actually giving the college little more than use of a name well recognized in the community. Although having well-known board members may assist in fund raising, membership on a board which is legally accountable for the results of the management of an institution calls for more than membership in a prestigious social organization. On the other hand, we may see a decline of qualified people seeking trustee posts because of increasing time required and distasteful duties connected with trusteeship.

The board which does not understand the responsibilities of its role or is not committed to the planning and support of institutional objectives places an unfair burden on the already well-burdened president.

Navigation of today's highly complex institution of higher education through an era of revolution requires allied leadership of a competent chief executive (the president) and a knowledgeable, well functioning board. The lack of managerial abilities, a complete understanding of the needs and objectives of the institutions, and a selfless dedication to achieving these objectives by either the president or the board can place the college or university into a confused, defensive position. Through strength in allied leadership, the institution can become a driving, creative force in rising to a challenge for change by directing its own course.

Like any alliance, the strength of that between a college or university president and the board is generally determined during the selection or

appointive process. Although some institutional leadership marriages are entered without benefit of knowledgeable evaluation and have been successful either through the sheer determination of one of the partners, or by virtue of a lucky choice, the divorce rate is climbing at an alarming rate.

Knowledgeable evaluation pending an executive-board alliance in an institution of higher education requires honest appraisal by the prospective president or candidate for the board, and built-in evaluation systems for each.

We must utilize all available resources to correct the weaknesses of our institutions, the first of which calls for a strengthening of the process of selecting qualified presidents and trustees. Given the basic material of competent leadership in the president and the board and a wholesome alliance between the two, we can turn our attention to developing institutional sensitivity to the changing needs of its constituency. Competent management provides the ability to streamline the organizational structure to evaluate priorities, to establish concrete objectives, and to pursue those objectives to their fulfillment in the face of resistive forces.

Accountability in trustee performance is every bit as important as accountability in managerial performance. This writer suggests the following guidelines as reasonable discussion points between trustees and candidates for the presidency.

QUESTIONS THE BOARD SHOULD ASK OF ITSELF
(Or the presidential candidate should ask of the board)

1. Does the majority of the board understand the primary responsibilities and accountability of trusteeship?

a. Providing a professional work environment that will assist in the motivation of employees.

b. Protecting the assets of the institution.

c. Adopting and maintaining current institutional policies.

d. Obtaining, maintaining and rewarding a well qualified management team and staff. Delegating the management to a president appointed by the Board and accountable to the Board.

e. Assuming responsibility for the acts of the Board's agents.

f. The significance of the presidential appointment process.

2. Are Board members fully aware of the complexities and potentially time consuming nature of trusteeship?

3. Are the goals of the institution clearling defined and understood? Annually? Long-range (10-year)?

4. What commitments is the Board willing to make in pursuing these goals?

5. Does the Board understand the stage of development of the organizaion (present status) including the major corrections and stimuli that may be needed?

6. Are Board members adequately oriented to college and university trusteeship? Do they understand their institutional-staff relationship.

7. Does the Board represent its community in the classic democratic sense? (Or does it primarily represent community power?)

8. Does the Board understand the community it serves.

9. What evidence is there that the Board is flexible and open to change?

10. Are members well informed on legislative issues which pertain to their institution, and to colleges and universities in general?
11. Do they feel that, because the position is without recompense, their commitment and knowledge of organizational dynamics can be less than a director serving a comparable multi-million dollar corporation?
12. What were their reasons for seeking trusteeship? (Could it have been more status than altruistic motivation?)
13. Have Board members who have served over long terms become static?
14. Does the Board make provisions for, and carry on, a self evaluation process?
15. Does the Board recognize the full scope of the president's responsibilities?
16. Do they understand the presidency as a top manager's job, requiring many of the same functional skills of management required in business?
17. Do they understand the skills and experience that qualify an individual for a chief executive's position.
18. Do they understand the specific skills and experiences that are needed to effectively manage <u>their</u> institution?
19. Do the members understand organizational dynamics? What exposure has each had to organizational operations?
20. Have individual Board members been appointed or elected to the Board to represent a specific constituency, issue or problem, or are they free to look objectively across the institution without bias or prejudice?
21. Has the Board insisted on an orderly decision making matrix in the institution?

22. Has the Board insisted on the clarification of the role of faculty (faculty senate) students and administration in the management, operation and decision making processes of the institution? Does a written document exist?

QUESTIONS THE BOARD SHOULD ASK OF THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE
(And the candidate should ask of himself)

1. Does the candidate understand the nature of the duties, responsibilities, scope of authority and reporting relationships involving the position of a chief executive officer?
2. Does he understand his responsibility to report a true picture of the status of the institution to the Board, including financial and statistical information and such intangibles as organization and morale?
3. Does he understand the Board's responsibilities and the manner in which they should be carried out?
4. Is he sensitive to the need of a good management information system to aid the trustees and administrators in good decision making, or is he able to discern the need not to know all and operate on a "management by exception" principle.
5. Does the candidate appear to understand goal setting, priority decision making, etc.?
6. Do the institutional goals seem realistic from the standpoint of content, resources, and facilities of the institution and the community? (Or do they set an impossible task for the institution?)

7. Are his values in sufficient agreement with those of the Board and the community?
The goals of the institution? Ask the candidate to cite models of individual philosophy or managerial behavior acceptable to him.

8. Will he commit himself to planning for the future? Can he produce evidence or examples of his effectiveness as a long-range planner?

9. What specific experiences or background most equip the candidate for the job?

10. Has he had experience under firing-line conditions? Experience in the delegation of authority and responsibility of getting a similar job done?

11. Has he successfully occupied a position in which he shouldered the final responsibility for his decisions?

12. Has he, in past experience, had to cope with the unexpected?

13. Does he have the administrative skills of organizing his own work and that of others? Of delegation? Critical appraisal? Executive judgement? The ability to distinguish between symptoms and causes?

14. Is he effective in communicating with others? How do you rate the candidate's interpersonal competence?

15. Has he demonstrated selling power? Is he a persuasive leader?

16. Does he have a high degree of creativity and imagination?

17. Does he have the ability to motivate people and get them to work together?

18. Is he flexible, with the ability to adjust rapidly to changing conditions? Receptive to innovation and change? Does he possess a versatile leadership style?

19. Does he have the ability to see problems in broad perspective and to make decisions on the basis of long range implications rather than short-range goals?

20. Is he fixed in his conviction of the basic rightness of his beliefs, and therefore less subject to outside influence?

21. Does he have self-assurance and courage?

22. Does he have a high degree of empathy; the ability to see and feel from others' point of view, to sense total situations, to size up people?

23. Does he have an open receptivity to suggestions and criticism?

24. Does he have the willingness to risk the loss of the approbation and support of others, if necessary, by thinking independently and taking a firm stand saying "no" when necessary to get the job done?

25. Does he resent soft compromise on standards, technical requirements, expenditures, procedures, and morale problems?

26. What are his basic motivations or long-range career goals? Will his ambitions interfere with his dedication to the priorities of the institution?

27. In developing the institution is the candidate capable of purporting a strategy that builds in commitment and involvement from all people affected?

28. Does the candidate fully understand the current financial position of the college? Does at least a five-year financial plan exist?

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